

CLAIMS:

1           1.       In a computer system having a control knob and a display screen, a method  
2 comprising the steps of:

3               detecting a physical presence proximate to or in contact with the control knob for a  
4 predefined period in which the control knob is stationary; and

5               displaying a display widget on the display screen responsive to said step of detecting, the  
6 display widget providing status information associated with the control knob.

1           2.       The method according to claim 1, wherein the status information includes volume  
2 settings.

1           3.       The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of changing the  
2 status information in the display widget responsive to an input control other than the control  
3 knob while detecting the physical presence proximate to or contacting the control knob.

1           4.       The method according to claim 3, wherein the input control is a pointing device.

1           5.       In a computer system having a control switch and a display screen, a method  
2 comprising the steps of:

3               detecting a physical presence proximate to or contacting the control switch for a first  
4 predefined period in which the control switch maintains a current switch state; and

5               displaying a display widget on the display screen responsive to said step of detecting, the  
6 display widget providing status information associated with the control switch.

1           6.       The method according to claim 5, wherein the control switch is one of a rocker  
2 switch or dial switch.

1           7.       The method according to claim 5, wherein the status information identifies at least  
2 one of track name, track time remaining, track length, album title and album length in a  
3 multimedia application..

1           8.       The method according to claim 7, wherein said step of displaying further includes  
2 displaying a multimedia control panel.

1           9.       The method according to claim 5, wherein the status information relates to a  
2 game.

1           10.      The method according to claim 5, further comprising the step of changing the  
2 status information in the display widget responsive to an input control other than the control  
3 switch.

1           11.      The method according to claim 10, wherein the input control is a headset or a  
2 microphone.

1           12.      The method according to claim 5, wherein the status information identifies  
2 currently running applications.

1           13.      The method according to claim 12, further comprising the step of placing an  
2 identified application in the foreground of the display screen, responsive to a user's selection of  
3 the application using the control switch.

1           14.      The method according to claim 5, wherein the status information includes a task  
2 bar.

1           15.      The method according to claim 5, further comprising the steps of:

2 detecting absence of the physical presence proximate to or contacting the control switch  
3 for a second predefined period while displaying the display widget ; and  
4 discontinuing display of the display widget, responsive to detecting the absence of the  
5 physical presence.

1 16. In a computer system having an input device including an auxiliary control and a  
2 display screen, a method comprising the steps of:

3 detecting a physical presence proximate to or contacting the auxiliary control for a first  
4 predefined period in which the auxiliary control maintains a current control state; and

5 displaying a display widget on the display screen responsive to said step of detecting, the  
6 display widget providing status information associated with the auxiliary control.

1 17. The method according to claim 16, wherein the auxiliary control is one of a  
2 joystick or a wheel.

1 18. The method according to claim 16, wherein the auxiliary control is one of a  
2 button or a key.

1 19. The method according to claim 16, wherein the physical presence is a hand of a  
2 user.

1 20. The method according to claim 16, further comprising the steps of:

2 detecting absence of the physical presence proximate to or contacting the auxiliary  
3 control for a second predefined period while displaying the display widget; and

4 discontinuing display of the display widget, responsive to detecting the absence of the  
5 physical presence for the second predefined period.

1           21.     The method according to claim 16, further comprising the steps of:

2           detecting absence of the physical presence proximate to or contacting the auxiliary

3           control for a second predefined period while displaying the display widget;

4           determining if a pointer is located within the display widget on the display screen

5           responsive to said step of detecting; and

6           discontinuing display of the display widget when the pointer is not located within the

7           display widget.

1           22.     The method according to claim 16, further comprising the step of changing the

2           status information in the display widget using an input control other than the auxiliary control.

1           23.     The method according to claim 22, wherein the input control is a headset or a

2           microphone.

1           24.     The method according to claim 22, wherein the input control is a pointing device.

1           25.     The method according to claim 24, wherein the input device is one of a mouse,

2           trackball, touchpad, keyboard, or game controller.

1           26.     The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information identified only

2           applies to a single active application.

1           27.     The method according to claim 16, wherein the type of status information

2           associated with the auxiliary control displayed when a first application is active is different from

3           the type of status information associated with the auxiliary control displayed when a second

4           application is active.

1           28.    The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information is messaging  
2 related information.

1           29.    The method according to claim 28, wherein the status information includes one of  
2 the number of new or unread regular or high priority messages, an in box window, brief  
3 information regarding at least one of the most recently received messages, and alert status.

1           30.    The method according to claim 16, wherein when a web browser is an active  
2 application, the status information includes at least one of the most recently used searches, at  
3 least one of the most recently obtained search results, identification of previous and next web  
4 pages which may be visited, list of favorite web pages, and current page loading information.

1           31.    The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information includes a task  
2 bar.

1           32.    The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information identifies  
2 active applications.

1           33.    The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information provides  
2 printer status information.

1           34.    The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information identifies  
2 contents of a clipboard.

1           35.    The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information identifies at  
2 least one of time, date, location, file type and size of most recently saved file.

1           36.     The method according to claim 16, wherein the auxiliary control is a key  
2     representing a mathematical operator, and in a spreadsheet application, the status information  
3     identifying the result if the mathematical operator is applied to data in a spreadsheet.

4           37.     The method according to claim 16, wherein the auxiliary control is configured to  
5     control scrolling of the display screen, the status information identifying settings for the wheel.

1           38.     The method according to claim 16, wherein the input device is one of a mouse,  
2     trackball, touchpad, keyboard, or game controller.

1           39.     The method according to claim 16, wherein the status information relates to a  
2     game.

1           40.     In a computer system having an input device and a display screen, a method  
2     comprising the steps of:

3                 detecting a physical presence proximate to or contacting the input device for a first  
4     predefined period in which the control input device maintains a current control state; and

5                 causing information displayed on the display screen to disappear responsive to said step  
6     of detecting.

1           41.     The method according to claim 40, wherein the information includes a display  
2     widget.

1           42.     The method according to claim 41, wherein the display widget includes a scroll  
2     bar or a tool bar.

1           43.     The method according to claim 40, further comprising the steps of:

2 detecting absence of the physical presence proximate to or contacting the input device for  
3 a second predefined period after causing the information to disappear from the display screen;  
4 and  
5 causing the information to reappear on the display screen, responsive to detecting the  
6 absence of the physical presence for the second predefined period.

1 44. The method according to claim 40, wherein the input device is a pointing device  
2 wheel.

1 45. The method according to claim 40, wherein the input device is configured to  
2 control scrolling.

1 46. The method according claim 45, wherein the input device is a wheel or touchpad.

1 47. The method according to claim 40, wherein the input device is one of a button or  
2 a key.